

Turn

By Tom O'Neill

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On April 19, 2003 fourteen members of Troop 31 of Fayette, Iowa completed the task of cleaning up the Big Rock Access to the Volga River. It would be fair to say that 211 tires could be a haven for West Nile virus bearing mosquitoes. To local and out of state recreationists, the tires are an unsightly mess. In the spring of 1999, the Volga River swelled and flooded a part of the Volga River State Recreation Area. "The water rose as high as twenty feet," stated Tom Halverson, a park manager with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. With the flooding came an assortment of discarded trash and tires, washed down from upstream. For the uninformed, the rivers and streams of Iowa have become an unnatural depository for tires, large and small. Debris decorated the landscape and tires were snagged on tree limbs.



The Iowa DNR website describes the recreation area as, "located in one of the most scenic parts of the state. Northeast Iowa is often referred to as 'Little Switzerland' because of its rugged topography, geologic features and substantial timber cover which are in sharp contrast to the majority of the state's rolling hills, farmland and scattered stands of timber. The heavily wooded, rugged landscape of the Volga River is an exciting setting for a variety of outdoor recreation pursuits. The area provides excellent habitat for fish and wildlife. The Volga River, which meanders through the 5,420-acre area, holds smallmouth bass, rock bass, channel catfish and white suckers."

Troop 31 is a combination of Webelos and Boy Scouts. They range from age eight through sixteen. They were not paid nor prodded to clean up. Leadership was provided by both Troop leaders and parents; Rodger Post, Tim Nuss, Darwin Vandersee, Steve Greco and Delmar Aller. Accolades were few for the daunting task that was started in 2002 and completed in the spring of 2003. They did it for the simple fact: it's the right thing to do. In an era when infamous athletes are role models, politicians openly mislead their constituents and captains of industry embezzle from their own companies, the intrinsic notion of public service and civic duty still exists. These values were personified by Troop 31. Tires planted by the flood, were plucked up. Trash was gathered and brought up to an assembly area. A tractor tire appeared to tower twice the height of some of the youngest scouts. Taller scouts stood behind them and reached hand over hand to push the tire forward and uphill. It possibly resembled a rugby scrum, or the statue of U.S. Marines raising Old Glory on Mt. Suribachi, Iwo Jima. Such is the picture that should be posted in schools, businesses and communities, extolling the virtues of teamwork and achievement, a true success story. Some may question why? Maybe the caption should read, "Because it's there!"